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Be not ashamed of thy virtues; honor's a good brooch to wear in a man's hat at all times

Ben Jonson

Exit Nawaz Sharif

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been made to resign after the Supreme Court found him guilty in the money-laundering, wealth-concealment cases and in using a string of off-shore companies linked to the Sharif family to buy a number of luxury properties in London. The apex court of Pakistan has disqualified him for life from holding a public office. Sharif has kept up the tradition of no elected prime minister of Pakistan having ever completed his full term of office. Corruption allegations against Sharif date as far back as 1993 when investigations first began to look into thirteen specific allegations of corruption.

The Supreme Court's order forcing Nawaz to resign as prime minister has the full support of the Pakistan army with whom Nawaz had all along had an uneasy relationship. As things stand now, his brother and former Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif is likely to succeed him after some time. He has first to get himself elected to the Parliament. For the present, the ruling PML (N) has to nominate an interim prime minister. One of the reasons of Nawaz Sharif's undoing is believed to be his attempt to assert the independence of the civil government over the military which holds the actual levers of power. Sharif antagonized the army greatly when he ordered it to conclude the probe into the Pathankot air base attack and resume the inquiry into the Mumbai terror attacks and warned the brass-hats that Pakistan was facing growing international isolation for its perceived sponsoring of terrorism. Nawaz, despite his occasional anti-India rants, seemed to be in favour of a peaceful relationship with India, much to the dislike of the army. Whoever becomes his successor will be more circumspect in antagonizing the army if he has to remain in power. As Pakistan's relationship nosedives with Donald Trump's USA and it gravitates more and more toward China, it may face internal problems also. The proposed China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) promises great prosperity for Pakistan but it involves a political cost. Pakistan will have to be more and more subservient to Beijing. Already, the possibility of Pakistan becoming a colony of China is being discussed by the people there in hushed tones. As the economic squeeze following Trump's decision to drastically slash aid begins to have its effect on the economy, the army may have to deal with rising public discontent also. Nawaz Sharif has been thrown out of power but Pakistan's problems – both short and long-term – persist.

Quality of Railways' services: An issue

Ever since the NDA government returned to power after a decade of wilderness in 2014, the new dispensation under the inscrutable but all the more intrepid leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is blazing a new trial on the economic landscape with gusto. Whether it was the dismantling of the erstwhile Planning Commission, a relic of the socialist past , the demonetization of high denominational currencies or the merger of the rail budget with the general budget, the Schumpeterian paradigm of creative destruction has been the hallmark of this government, regardless of the wider ramifications this wrought on the body politic in its wake.

For the Indian Railways, the appointment of a former Shiv Sena leader Suresh Prabhu who was expelled from his party but who was greeted with open arms by the BJP with a ministerial berth as the Railways Minister, the auditor-turned politico was a better choice, given the past record when coalition partner satraps from the State ruled and ruined the arterial mode of transport. True to his salt, Prabhu did not refrain from undertaking a thorough overhaul of the existing business as usual approach and co-opted external agencies and institutions for funding its vast infrastructure development projects and programmes of a humongous order of eight lakh crore rupees spread over a five-year span. How far his efforts in this direction would pan out to retrieve the lost ground the railways suffered from the users' growing preference to roadways would be known only after the new projects are through from the drawing board before long.

Interestingly while adequate weighment arrangements were not made/ensured by the railways for weighment of leased parcel traffic, rules were framed for termination of contracts after fourth default of overloading! These were, however, not a deterrent as weighment was not being done as a regular measure to check overloading despite laid down norms. Stating that response for booking of leased parcel traffic through brake vans as well as parcel vans was inadequate, the report said that while offers received were far less than space offered on lease, railways did not allot parcel vans in 65 per cent of the cases.

As such, leasing space remained grossly unutilized, it said adding that leased traffic services suffered from lack of customer friendliness and from maladies like delays in internal processes and deficiencies in decision-making. For leasing of parcel space, a delay of upto 240 days in finalization of tenders by zonal railways was noticed. Customers had to cancel indents for parcel vans due to non-supply by railway administration and in many cases parcel vans were declared "sick after being loaded". A transport system aspired to be the swiftest and eco-friendly can ill-afford to lose its image on flimsy alibi like vans being sick as no business worth its name would accept such frivolous excuses when competing modes of transport carry without much hassles and least complaint quotients.

What is more shocking is that for non-leased traffic, zonal railways carried parcels beyond their intended destinations in a significant number of cases. In the two months test checked, railways carried 13565 over-carried parcels back to their original destinations. Over carriage of parcels also took away space in Assistant Guard's Cabin (AGC)/Brake Vans which could be utilized for transportation of parcel traffic. This resulted in hardships to the customers and fostered operational problems to the railway administration, the CAG report deplored adding that this also reflected on the quality of services being provided to the customers! There can be no direct hit on the railways for being slovenly in their remit to service customers with care and due regard to their legitimate concerns. The CAG report also dealt with the management of linen in IR as the coaching stock consist of 390 AC first class coaches (7500 berths), 2375 AC(2-tier) coaches (112350 berths) and 5302 AC 3-tier sleeper coaches (345091 berths). Noting that a robust system for procurement, washing and distribution of linen is indispensable to provide clean, hygienic, well-ironed and good quality linen to all passenger travelling in upper classes, audit found that as on end-March 2016 in respect of some of the linen items in selected General Stores Depots (GSDs), the stock in hand was less than one month's requirement. It further noted provision of inspection of a prescribed percentage of new supply was not being used effectively to ensure quality of the linen received. The storage space of GSD was not adequate and items were not stored in proper milieu, it said adding that the storage space I the coaching depots too was also not adequate and proper storing arrangements were not made at many places. To compound the woes of the traveling public paying through their noses, blankets and pillows were not dry cleaned and or sanitized for long periods before supply to the passengers, the CAG candidly said.

What galls the gullible travelers in premier trains is that at the end of the journey, the cleaning staff comes for baksheesh (tips) round as if the materials supplied were all spotless, free from gems and whatnot? The audit findings discussed here pertain only to two facets of the vast array of services the IR provides to its customers. But if the tip of the troubling icebergs is a pointer as to what great tasks lay ahead for the railway authorities to clean up the system that itself would be a sobering thought that acche din perhaps may dawn in the foreseeable future, if not in the medium-term. (IPA)

REFLEX ACTION

G. Srinivasan

ICG makes record haul of narcotics from Panama vessel off Gujarat coast

PORT BLAIR, JULY 31/-- / The Indian Coast Guard seized 1,500 kg of drugs (heroin and chitta) from a merchant ship off the Gujarat shoreline on Saturday, reportedly the biggest single haul of narcotics in India. The contraband is estimated to be around Rs 4,500 crore in the international market.

The vessel was spotted around 380km off Dwarka through surveillance mounted by the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO), a government intelligence-gathering agency. "The NTRO shared the intelligence about the suspect vessel on July 27 and the Coast Guard was notified. Intelligence suggested the crew was negotiating the mode of payment for the contraband and its intended destination," said a release from the Coast Guard, A & N Region.

The Indian Coast Guard Operations Centres at Mumbai, Gandhinagar and Porbandar were activated and a datum was established. Later the Coast Guard ships in area were alerted and Dornier aircraft sorties for maritime air reconnaissance were undertaken in the probable area. This was the moment where the electronic surveillance operated by Indian Coast Guard along Gujarat Coast was brought to high alert. The radar stations based at Dwarka, Navadra, Porbandar, Mangrol, Diu , Gopnath and Hazira were sweeping their respective zones for any suspected vessel. the air surveillance narrowed down at two in-bound cargo vessels emanating from the reference location with identity issues. The MSV Al-Amir and Noor-e-Shabbir on passage to Jam Salaya were intercepted by coast Guard Ships and detained on July 28 for investigation at Okha Port.

While the surveillance was underway, the Coast Guard Dornier was sanitizing the sea-area off gulf of Khambat picked up another vessel, not recognised on automatic identification system and was marked suspicious. ICGS Samudra Pavak was diverted from the scene of action to the advanced position of suspect vessel named Hennry which was to call at Bhavnagar port, for breaking at Alang. The VTMS and GMB authorities at Khambat were consulted and on confirmation that no such vessel was expected, Indian Coast Guard ships shadowed her movement. ICGS Ankit was positioned off Diu to augment support while CG Dorniers from Daman and Porbandar re-ascertained her movements. The role of CG helicopter was also crucial in carrying out air support mission sorties with ships. The vessel Hennry was observed transmitting her identity as Prince-II.

During earlier voyages, she has been identified as Al-Sadiq from a marine traffic website. Her present identity without holding any documents to support and in the absence of any formal permission to call her next port Bhavnagar, made her a defaulter and an intruder. ICGS Samudra Pavak intercepted and boarded her in the wee hours last Saturday. Further investigation at sea revealed that the OSV was registered in Panama with eight crew onboard and nil cargo. The intelligence agencies had information about a vessel of similar nature carrying 1.5 tonnes of heroin/chitta worth Rs.350 crore. The master when questioned, informed that this vessel is on passage for demolition, hence no documents are being carried.

The vessel was escorted by the CG ship to enter Porbandar on Sunday for interrogations at inner anchorage by Indian Coast Guard in the presence of other stakeholders viz. intelligence agencies, police, customs, enforcement, narcotics and Indian Navy. during the initial inspection by Coast Guard, approx 1500 kg of narcotics worth Rs 3500 crore have been found onboard. This is the biggest catch of narcotics in the present times, the released added.

NGGOA for addl. Counters at Power Site Offices

PORT BLAIR, JULY 31/-- / Non-Gazetted Govt. Officers' Association, A & N Islands demanded opening of additional counters at site offices of electricity department and introduce online facility for payment of electricity bills. In a letter to the Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Power), Mr T.S. Sreekumar, general secretary of the association invited his attention to the hardships facing by the Govt. employees and general public for timely payment of electricity bills.

He intimated the Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Power) that the Common Service Centres are not accepting the electricity bill for the last couple of months saying one or other reason like non-availability of link or GST problems or inadequate commission etc. The Association also pointed-out that 'surplus' staff are available in Electricity Department and it can open additional counters at site offices to ease the difficulties of consumers utilizing services of them.

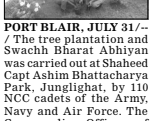
The Non-Gazetted Govt. Officers' Association also demanded opening of few 'evening' counters in Port Blair city for the convenience of working people especially thousands of government employees living in Port Blair area as they are forced to take leave now for the payment of Electricity bill.

The Association further pointed out that Electricity Departments/Boards of most of the other states have already introduced 'online payment facility' for their consumers so that they can pay their electricity bills from their home itself. Introduction of 'online payment facility' will be a big boon to the consumers as they can avoid long queue and payment of additional commission to the private Common Service Centres.

Awareness prog. on disability

PORT BLAIR, JULY 31/--/ An awareness programme on disability was held for staff members of the Zilla Parishad on Monday. A slideshow presentation was made by the IT Cell on the various aspects of disability and legal provisions under it. The awareness programme was attended by Mr Jaydeep Kumar Dey, Adhyaksh, Zilla Parishad, South Andaman, and Smt. Shashi Kaushal, Chief Executive Officer, Zilla Parishad, South Andaman, Zilla Parishad Members besides other staff of Zilla Parishad, South Andaman.

Saplings planted



PORT BLAIR, JULY 31/-- / The tree plantation and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan was carried out at Shaheed Capt Ashim Bhattacharya Park, Junglighat, by 110 NCC cadets of the Army, Navy and Air Force. The Commanding Officers of both the Army and Naval NCC units and PI staff participated in the event.

The cadets planted a large number of medicinal and ornamental plants which were made available by the Forest department. The cadets alongwith the locals present were apprised about the harmful effect of plastic on our environment.

DEO W/Gunj bids adieu to Daftry

PORT BLAIR, JULY 31/--/After serving for more than 39 years in the Education Department, Mr P.Hamza, Daftry attached to the office of the Deputy Education Officer, Wimberlygunj, superannuated from government service on Monday. The Deputy Education Officer, Mr Gyan Sheel Dubey along with other office staff bid farewell to Mr Hamza and wished him a happy retirement life. All retirement benefits including GPF etc has been cleared by the Pay and Accounts Office and will be credited to the account of Mr Hamza soon.

Practicum on business reforms underway at Megapode

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Addressing the gathering, the Chief Secretary appreciated the Industries Department for organizing the workshop and said the workshop was conducted at the appropriate time stating that the business in the islands revolves mostly around tourism and hospitality sector, besides fisheries, handicraft, coir industry etc. "Once the under-sea cable project is materialized, the IT Industry in these islands will get a big boost."

He said that the Administration is taking care of the fragile eco-system of the Islands while carrying out development activities. The Chief Secretary complimented the Labour Department and the PBMC as well, for their initiatives towards implementation of 'ease of doing business' in the Islands. The Secretary Industries, Smt. Rashmi Singh thanked the DIPP for taking the initiative to cover A&N Islands along with other States & UTs, with the support of World Bank. By visiting states and UTs, the DIPP has so far covered 18 places, she added. She also appreciated the effort of DIPP in building the capacity of various Departments and enlightening them about various kinds of guidelines for implementing the scheme. The Secretary said that it is good opportunity for one and all to clear the doubts on the implementation of 'Ease of Doing Business'. Ms Kriti Gupta, representative from DIPP expressed gratitude to the A&N Administration for arranging the workshop. She said, DIPP had introduced the Business Reform Action Plan in 2014 but the true reform can happen when the States improve the process of its implementation, which will improve the overall ranking of the Country. Mr Anuj Choudhary, representative from World Bank said that World Bank does the business ranking on 10 broad business parameters. India was ranked 142 in 2014 and when the new govt. came into power, the ranking improved from 142 to 130, he added. The Director of Industries, Mr Ajit Anand welcomed the gathering. Mr Gautam Mandal, General Manager DIC proposed the vote of thanks.

Preserve isles' rich biodiversity for future generations: LG

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Speaking about the impact of global warming, the Lt. Governor remarked that over exploitation of nature and its resources will lead to adverse reaction, hence the need for judicious uses of forest resources has to be kept in mind constantly. "Through conservation of the forests, we will be able to enjoy the greeneries around us and this will also enable us to mitigate the impact of global warming to a great extent", he said urging everyone to strive towards preservation, expansion & development of the forests. The Lt. Governor said the celebration of Van Mahotsav should not be limited only to the usual tree plantation ceremony, but it must also awaken in each of us, the desire to plant saplings or trees wholeheartedly. With such mentality, the country will never face the problem of depletion of forest covers, he added. The Lt. Governor also appealed the students, teachers, Panchayati Raj Institutions and the general public to involve themselves in the protection and conservation of the environment and the rich biodiversity of the Isles by planting more and more trees. He stated that PRIs can play a vital role in their respective wards by spreading the message of conservation of forests; and this can be a real achievement. Speaking about the significance of the celebration of Van Mahotsav, the Lt. Governor expressed happiness that students are being made aware of the importance of Van Mahotsav extensively through various competitions and programmes, organized by the Department of Forests. However, he said, the general public should also be made part of such programmes, as this will benefit them immensely. He also expressed the desire that such functions should be organized in an open ground involving all sections of the society so that the message of Van Mahotsav reaches one and all. The Lt. Governor also distributed certificates and prizes to the winners of various competitions held during the month long celebration and congratulated them. The PCCF also presented mementoes and saplings to the Lt. Governor and the Chief Secretary on the occasion. The Chief Secretary, Mr Anindo Majumdar said that the celebration of Van Mahotsav is not only for improving the green cover of the environment we live in, but it also calls for protection and caring of the beaches and various tourist spots of the Islands by ensuring that the serenity of the Islands are maintained. He also expressed happiness that this year the celebration of 68th Van Mahotsav has been a large scale event and the Department of Environment & Forests had organized various activities during the month long celebration by involving the students, who are our future. He said, with such activities, students will have access to a better, cleaner and greener future. Lauding the Department of Environment and Forests, the Chief Secretary said, the A&N Islands have 94% of forest cover and this is due to the measures taken by the Department which deserves appreciation.

The PCCF, Mr Tarun Coomer highlighted the significance of Van Mahotsav. He said, the celebration of Van Mahotsav is more than planting saplings & trees as with this, over the years, people have acquired a sense of belonging and understanding the free benefits we get from individual trees we plant. He also called upon everyone to come forward in preserving and protecting the environment we live in by planting more and more trees.

Earlier, the CCF (Research & Working Plan), Dr Ravichandrean welcomed the gathering. A welcome song was presented by the students of TGCE. The DFO (Forest Publicity & Extension Division), Mr P. K. Paul proposed the vote of thanks.

Progress of foundation course...

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As part of month long celebration of 68th Van Mahotsav, Dr. Singh planted an endemic bamboo of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Schizostachyum kurzii and an endemic palm, Bentinckia nicobarica was planted by Mr Shukla in the garden. They also visited different sections of the garden and held discussions with scientists on survey and documentation of plant species, new discoveries, ex-situ conservation activities by scientists of BSI, ANRC. During the visit, Dr. Lal Ji Singh, Head of Office explained research activities of the Botanical Survey of India, Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre on plant diversity and the intensive botanical explorations and authentic documentation of flora of the Islands enriching the herbarium and the museum of the Centre. Scientists of BSI, Dr. Jagadeesh Ram T.A.M, Dr. Sanjay

Bollywood show at Bambooflat-II

PORT BLAIR, JULY 31/-- / Grand Bollywood Musical Nite will be organized by Rajya Kalakar Mahasangh and Mr AP Hussain, Pradhan, Bambooflat-II Panchayat on Tuesday from 5.30 pm at Puja Pandal, Naya Basthi, Gram Panchayat Bambooflat-II. Bollywood Director, Mr Mukesh Dadiya and playback singer Sheetal will perform on the occasion. Entry to the musical programme is free.

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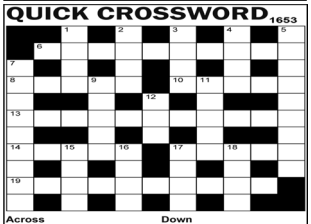

Across
6. Nonsense (10)
8. Very angry (5)
10. Soldier's decoration (5)
13. Plant-eating (11)
14. Japanese mattress (5)
17. Shoulder warmer (5)
19. Seaside tower (10)

Down
1. Computer input (4)
2. Slight advantage (4)
3. Affectedly proper (4)
4. Employee (4)
5. Sell to retailers (9)
7. Dusk (9)
9. Forbidden (5)
11. Planet (5)
12. Spreading plant (3)
15. Pulls (4)
16. Jot down (4)
17. Exhibit (4)
18. As well (4)

Previous solution
Across: 1. Attire, 3. Twin, 7. Core, 8. Hamper, 10. Compete, 13. Sucrose, 16. Trough, 17. Pact, 18. Deny, 19. Rhythm.
Down: 1. Arch, 2. Terror, 4. Wipe, 5. Narrow, 6. Pattern, 9. Upsurge, 11. Gifted, 12. Aslant, 14. Soon, 15. Stem.

SUDOKU : 1934

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Yesterday's Solution 1933

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3	5	6	9	7	1	4	8	2
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7	6	8	3	9	5	2	1	4
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